route. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has taken any steps, through Iran, to pressurise Pakistan to cooperate in the matter.

SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as the hon. Member is aware of the fact, we have independent relations with Iran and we don't want any country to be pressurised by any other country. Whatever problems are there between India and Pakistan, we will resolve them amicably and we will do it on our own. As far as the new route is concerned, as the House is aware, we have just signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The hon. Member has correctly said that one of the reasons for doing it quickly was this. We had given one million tonnes of aid to Afghanistan, but Pakistan denied to give the route. That is why we have gone for it urgently.

*47. [The questioner Shri Yadlapat Venkat Rao was absent. For answer *vide* page 47 *infra*.]

*48. [The questioners Shri Raju Parmar and Shri Bhagatram Manhar were absent for answer *vide* pages 52-53 *infra*.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Nos. 49 and 59 are being clubbed together. Shrimati Kum Kum Rai.

Rise in Telephone Rental

*49. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI:††

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rental, call tariff, etc., in respect of fixed telephone lines have been increased steeply; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this revision has been made to favour the cellular and private WILL operators, patronised by the business and upper segments of the society;

(c) whether there is a lot of resentment among the subscribers of the fixed telephone lines;

(d) if so, whether Government propose to revert to the old tariff and rental; and

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the house by Shrimati Kum Kum Rai.

(e) if not, the justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The telecome Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) who have the power to fix tariffs for telecom services, have revised them vide the 24th Amendment to the Telecom Tariff Order (TTO) 1999, notified on 24-01-2003. These will come into effect from 1st April, 2003. The changes in the major items of tariff proposed by TRAI in respect of fixed telephone lines are given in the enclosed statement. (*see* below).

(b) No, Sir. The TRAI, after detailed consultations through consultation papers and its open house discussions, have revised tariff is as part of an ongoing tariff re-balancing exercise to bring the telecom tariffs closer to cost.

(c) Certain representations against the above increase in telecom tariffs have been received and forwarded to TRAI for appropriate action.

(d) and (e) No, Sir. As per sub section 11(2) of the TRAI Act, 1997, as amended in 2000, the power to fix tariffs for telecom services is mandated to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, which is now the only Authority for exercising this power, Service providers (including PSUs), however, have the flexibility of having their own tariff packages within the ceilings/floors prescribed by TRAI.

Statement

Changes in the major items of tariff proposed by TRAI

A. RURAL RENTALS (Monthly in Rupees):

Capacity of local Exchange (no. of lines)	Existing TRAI ceiling	Proposed by TRAI	
		Sr. Citizen	Others
Upto 999	70	70	70.
1000-29,999	120	120	120
30,000-99,999	180	180	200
1 lakh and above	250	250	280

B. URBAN RENTALS (Monthly in Rupees):

Capacity of local Exchange (no. of lines)	Existing TRAI Ceiling	Proposed by TRAI	
		Sr. Citizen	Residential Subscribers
Upto 29,999	120	120	120
30,000-99,999	180	180	200
1 lakh and above	250	250	280

C. Number of FREE CALLS (Per month)

	Existing TRAI Ceiling	Proposed by TRAI
Rural	75	50
Urban	60	30

D. CALL CHARGES (in Rupee, per metered call)

Existing TRAI slabs		Proposed by TRAI	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
0-75 Free	0-60 Free	0-50 Free	0-30 Free
76-500@ 0.80	61-500@ 0.80	51-300@ 0.80	31-300@ 1.00
>500@ 1.20	>500@ 1.20	>300@ 1.20	>300@ 1.20

E. Pulse Rate (in Seconds)

Existing		Proposed by TRAI	
		Calls to basic services network	120
		Calls to cellular (Metro area)	90
Calls to all networks	180	Calls to cellular (Circle area)	60